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ABSTRACT

Education standards are of crucial importance to American business leaders. The successful corporation of the 21st century will require large numbers of continuously educated, highly skilled workers. Education standards must encourage the kind of productive work habits and sense of self-responsibility in school that will be required on the job and in life. The Business Task Force on Student Standards has developed the following principles to guide the standard-setting process: (1) all students should be given the opportunity to master challenging academic subject matter calibrated against world-class education standards; (2) there must be one set of standards for all students; (3) standards must have a common core of skills; (4) standards must reflect "real-world" requirements; (5) standards must be voluntary; (6) standards must be dynamic; (7) standards must include criteria against which performance is measured; (8) business leaders must participate in standards development; and (9) standards and performance measures must be understood and supported by parents and the general public. The government, educators, business, and the public must contribute to the development of standards and to helping all students achieve those standards. The business community is prepared to participate actively in these efforts. (SLD)

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ED 414 366

Challenge of Change

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This booklet is part of the **Standards Mean Business** Leadership Kit; developed by the Business Coalition for Education Reform (BCER). This kit includes several tools to help business leaders engage their communities in conversations about the importance of all students achieving high academic standards. For more information about the Standards Mean Business Leadership Kit, contact the BCER at the National Alliance of Business by calling 800/787-2848.

This second release of Challenge of Change *highlights the growing awareness of the importance of academic standards in improving education in America. Since its original release in January 1995, this publication has been widely read by educators, business leaders, and concerned citizens across the country.*

Business Coalition for Education Reform

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BUSINESS

Challenge of Change

Standards to Make Education Work for All Our Children

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Challenge of Change

Summary

Education standards must encourage the kind of productive work habits and sense of self-responsibility in school that will be required on the job and in life. If young people leave school after 12 years of low expectations, shoddy work, and minimal performance, their future prospects as citizens and workers can only be grim.

The Business Task Force on Student Standards believes that nine principles should guide the standards-setting process:

1. All students should be given the opportunity to master challenging academic subject-matter calibrated against world-class education standards.

2. There must be one set of standards for all students.

3. Standards must have a common core of skills.

4. Standards must reflect "real world" requirements.

5. Standards must be voluntary.

6. Standards must be dynamic.

7. Standards must include criteria against which performance is measured.

8. Business leaders must have a seat at the table.

9. Standards and performance measures must be understood and supported by parents and the general public.

The agenda outlined above is ambitious. Responsibility for carrying it out must fall on the shoulders of all who depend on the judgement, knowledge, and skills of our citizens. This means that government, educators, business, and the public must contribute to the development of standards and to helping all students achieve those standards. The business community is prepared to participate actively in these efforts.

Introduction

The world in which most American adults were raised no longer exists. And the world in which we live today will be dramatically different in the year 2005. We have to prepare ourselves and our children for a new age and a different era, the outlines of which are becoming more apparent.

In the conditions of modern life, the accelerating pace of change is the only constant. The consequences of this new situation can be examined every morning in the daily newspaper: the end of the Cold War and the growth of regional instability; the end of apartheid in South Africa; the transformation of the United States from the world's largest creditor to its largest debtor in just 15 years; and intensified jostling for competitive advantage in the three great trading blocs — North America, Europe, and the Pacific Rim. None of these developments was forecast just 10 years ago; today, each of them seems like yesterday's news.

These and other powerful global changes have transformed the business world. From the board room to the factory floor; from the executive suite to the service desk; the role, function, and measurement of work has dramatically changed. As a result, the skills to be acquired or developed in school and throughout one's career have also changed.

Thirty-five corporations have representatives serving on the Business Task Force on Student Standards that helped the Business Coalition for Education Reform (see Appendix B) develop this statement. Members of the Task Force and the Coalition issued this paper as optimists, confident that, effectively engaged, the American people and their leaders will do the right things for themselves, their nation, and their children. But the business community is also realistic: The challenges ahead are real. They are sobering. They cannot be wished away.

Making Education Work For All Our Children

These challenges must be met in the nation's schools. What the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said nearly a century ago is equally valid today: "In the conditions of modern life, the rule is absolute: The nation that does not value trained intelligence is doomed."

No issue is of more profound importance for the United States as it approaches a new century than the quality of its schools and the standards of performance to which students in these schools are held. Schools must work to educate all students.

The Task Force believes that the broad base of its membership and the depth of its members' commitment to education improvement provides it with a unique ability to describe and define the business interest in standards. If standards-setting activities are to fulfill their full promise, they must address several critical business concerns:

- Workplace performance requirements of industry and commerce must be integrated into subject-matter standards and learning environments.
- The skills and abilities (see page 8) defined by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) represent a solid foundation on which to build.
- Standards in all learning areas should be based on a framework of common principles.
- There should be a clear and comprehensive set of incentives and disincentives to hold students, teachers, and school systems accountable for achieving these standards.

Standards: A Concern For Business And Individuals

Education standards are of crucial importance to American business leaders. The emerging age of information and telecommunications is changing work and the workplace as profoundly as the Industrial Revolution transformed the agricultural economy. These changes demand a new kind of worker — the

knowledge worker — with a new set of skills, because enterprise itself needs to be organized in new ways.

Integrated microchip circuits and computers are the steam engines of today's life. They promise a new business revolution, every bit as sweeping as the Industrial Revolution. Forming the centerpiece of this business revolution are new kinds of products or services which, due to the latest innovations in information systems, organizational dynamics, and manufacturing processes, are being made available at any time, in any place, in any variety, and virtually on demand. New products or services — prescription eyeglasses ground and custom-fitted in 60 minutes, digital cameras producing instantaneous images, overnight express mail, ten-minute oil changes, cash on demand from ATMs — can be made available the moment they are designed.

As our nation and the states go about their work of setting education standards, Japanese automakers are striving to produce cars to domestic order in just 72 hours. Corporations must master ever more sophisticated types of information, new organizational structures, and complex new production skills. Success will lie with those companies that most nearly attain the goal of instantaneous production of "mass-customized" goods and services mass-produced and tailored, customer by customer, at higher levels of quality.

In this new economy, company, supplier, and customer interact continually. Walls between traditional operating divisions are torn down and rebuilt as needed. Job responsibilities and lines of authority shift continuously. The processes of design and production merge into a constant flow. Economic activity becomes less location-dependent, but must be more location-responsive as corporations adapt to meet highly specific and differentiated demands successfully in most parts of the world. In a 1994 RAND study of how American colleges and corporations view the human resource demands of the new global economy, one corporate executive told the researchers, "We want to be able to put together the best team for the client's problem, drawing on the right kinds of expertise, regardless of where the people happen to be located." Another said: "The phrase 'home country' is losing its meaning."

The implications are clear: the successful corporation of the 21st Century will require large numbers of continuously educated, highly skilled workers. As the RAND study indicated, business leaders place a premium on generic skills not usually associated with specific disciplinary training — cognitive and social skills, personal characteristics, capacities for problem solving, decision

making, knowing how to learn, and for working in teams with people from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. Across the world, companies are already responding. If the United States does not also create such enterprises, staffed by such people, it will fall behind.

It is true, of course, that every business enterprise will have high-skilled, medium-skilled, and low-skilled jobs. The reality, however, is that the skill levels of all jobs, even the most basic, will be much higher in the next century. Ten years ago, secretaries typed and filed. Today, they need to understand word-processing and computer data storage. Farming once absorbed millions of unskilled workers. It is now a high-tech activity requiring new skills and understanding — even for "unskilled" farmhands. The jobs of receptionists, truck drivers, public safety officers, and even refuse collectors are being computerized as never before. More and more decisions concerning customer service, productivity, and quality control are being delegated to the lowest level in an organization.

These are the stakes for American firms as our nation contemplates setting standards for students. The nation's schools must produce, in all graduates, levels of skill and competence in new areas once not even thought necessary for the select few destined for higher education. As the National Commission on Excellence in Education said twelve years ago: "History is not kind to idlers. . . America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer." The new workplace cannot be achieved without an education system that begins preparing children with the new skills and competencies required.

In the Task Force's view, subject-matter standards must integrate these new workplace imperatives. This conviction transcends the needs of business and industry alone. Parents and students have a direct interest in ensuring that young people have the skills and abilities needed to contribute in our highly competitive economy. Those who do not are likely to face declining prospects. They will not work regularly; they may not work at all. Unemployment, underemployment, and a tenuous connection with the labor market will stretch out before them for years, perhaps for a lifetime.

For both firms and employees, this complex issue can be distilled into a simple and straightforward challenge — economic survival.

SCANS: A Solid Start

Fortunately, the nation's educators do not have to start from scratch to integrate workplace skills into the curriculum. The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) made a solid start on this task between 1990 and 1992.

SCANS investigated the skills and abilities required for effective job performance today and in the future. The Commission tried to define a "particular kind of learner, one who can put knowledge and skills into practice as a productive worker, a responsible citizen, and a more complete human being," and released its conclusions in two reports, *What Work Requires of Schools* (June 1991) and *Learning a Living* (April 1992).

The Commission developed a two-part typology of foundation and workplace skills needed in the emerging high-performance workplace. Referring to this typology as new "Workplace Know-How" (see Figure 1), the Commission expressed the view that an assessment system should be developed to measure students' mastery of each of the SCANS skills on a scale of one to five. The Commission's hope was that all students would be able to attain a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) by the age of 16. Moreover, the SCANS commissioners anticipated that advanced levels of mastery might be obtained in secondary schools, youth centers, on the job, or in higher education — but acknowledged that further work in these areas is required.

With respect to the basic skills included in the foundation skills, SCANS estimated that fewer than half of today's young adults possess the reading and writing skills needed for skilled performance on the job. Even fewer can handle the mathematics required, and many schools only indirectly address listening and speaking skills. The result is that employers have no assurance that today's graduates can read well enough to understand instructions, write well enough to respond to customer inquiries, compute well enough to solve simple problems, listen and speak well enough to explain procedures and schedules, respond to consumer complaints, or describe complex systems.

The point is obvious: Graduates without the foundation skills are even less likely to be able to make productive use of resources, teams, information, systems, or technology.

This workplace know-how must be the focus of the standards discussion.

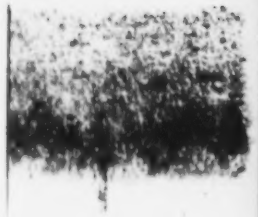

Figure 1

The SCANS* Skills: Workplace Know-How

The know-how identified by SCANS is made up of three foundation and five workplace skills

Three Foundation Skills: Competent workers in the high-performance workplace need:

#1	Basic Skills	reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, and listening.
#2	Thinking Skills	the ability to learn, to reason, to think creatively, to make decisions, and to solve problems.
#3	Personal Qualities	individual responsibility, self-esteem and self-management, sociability, and integrity.

Five Workplace Skills: Effective workers demonstrate their skills in managing or using:

#1	Resources	They know how to allocate time, money, materials, space, and staff.
#2	Interpersonal Skills	They can work on teams, teach others, serve customers, lead, negotiate, and work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
#3	Information	They can acquire and evaluate data; organize and maintain files; interpret, communicate, and use computers to process information.
#4	System	They understand social, organizational, and technological systems; monitor and correct performance; and design or improve systems.
#5	Technology	They can select equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks, and maintain and troubleshoot equipment.

* The Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, commonly called the SCANS Commission, was convened in 1990 by then Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole to identify the skills and abilities required for effective job performance.

A Framework of Common Principles

The process of developing a variety of standards for voluntary state and local adoption cannot be a hit-or-miss activity. Critical to the success of the standards-setting and approval process is gaining the confidence of the American people — and their business leaders — in the process itself.

The Task Force believes nine principles can provide shape and focus to the complex and difficult task ahead. These principles govern both the integrity of the standards and the integrity of the process by which they are developed.

1. **All students should be given the opportunity to master challenging academic subject matter calibrated against world-class education standards.**

This is the heart of the business community's position on standards. There are already standards that impact companies, workers, and schools around the world and in almost all American communities. Those standards are reflected daily in the countless decisions made by companies as they hire, fire, and promote people based on their having or not having the academic, teamwork, and personal management skills seen as requisite for productive work. Those standards, and the ability of the labor pool in an area to meet the standards, also guide companies as they choose locations for their work.

There is no reason to believe that American students cannot master the difficult substance in core academic subjects that is routinely expected of students in other lands. On the contrary, Americans have always risen to such a challenge once they have understood it clearly.

Our national standards must be benchmarked, not against the highest standards in the United States, but against the highest in the world. The question before us is not which school district or state does the best job with most students in the teaching and learning of language, or mathematics, or science. Rather, it is where, on the face of the globe, are educators and students together doing the best job? These are the standards to which American firms must hold themselves. The business community believes that no less should be expected of American teachers, parents, and students.

The Task Force wants to be clear on this issue. These are the standards against which America is already competing. Our failure to meet and keep pace with these standards will negatively affect us all. In a great nation, world-class standards for student learning are essential.

2. There must be one set of standards for all students.

The business community stresses that the United States needs one set of high standards. The larger education reform movement will fail if we continue to have one set of expectations for young people destined for college, and another for those going directly into the workforce.

The skills and capabilities needed by high school graduates seeking employment are essentially the same as the ones they will need to succeed in postsecondary education and to be good citizens in a democracy. Regardless of what they do in the first few years after high school, young people will eventually seek productive employment in an economy that demands thinking, reasoning, questioning, and continuous learning on the job. Many young people who initially enter the job market will decide later to attend college. Whatever their initial and subsequent choices about work and further education, today's students need to think of themselves as lifelong learners — oriented toward continued education and training throughout their careers.

In their private lives, citizens will also have to deal with the challenge of change and make the best decisions with their own career opportunities, with difficult public questions that must be resolved in the voting booth, and with vexing local issues that require community participation and leadership.

SCANS was correct: Standards must be oriented toward a new kind of learner — one who can put knowledge and skills into practice as a productive worker, a responsible citizen, and a more complete human being.

Educators recognize that different students master high standards and expectations in different ways and on different timetables, but there should be no equivocation about the underlying ideal: All children must learn to much higher standards — those currently expected of college-bound high school students. Anything less is not world-class.

3. Standards must have a common core of skills.

There is an "irreducible minimum" of core skills that all students must master or their chances for success and their opportunities for employment, advancement, and further education will be almost nonexistent. This common core of essential skills includes both traditional academic subject mastery and more.

The proficiency level needed in the "basics," such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, and using mathematics, is much higher for virtually all jobs than the public realizes. Beyond the "three Rs" are other critical core skills which individuals must have to get, keep, and progress on a job. They must be able to think, evaluate situations, solve problems, and make decisions. They must use technology, tools, and information effectively. They must access and apply specialized knowledge from various fields (e.g. sciences, arts, social sciences, history). They must know how to learn. They must also exhibit positive attitudes and behaviors such as integrity, responsibility, adaptability, and ability to work with others to achieve the organization's goals.

Our nation's and the states' academic standards must be built around the core skills, so that all subjects — English, foreign languages, the arts, mathematics, history, geography, science, civics, and economics — develop and reinforce the ability of students to think about and apply specialized knowledge from the disciplines to the tasks they will encounter in their lives as workers and citizens. The standards for content areas may help students reach beyond mastery of the common core of skills, but the essential core must not be lost in the mass of subject matter objectives.

4. Standards must reflect "real world" requirements.

High school graduates should not have to use trial-and-error learning to discover what is expected of them by employers and postsecondary education institutions. Our education standards should tell students what they must master to be ready for further learning, productive work, and lives as contributing citizens. Wherever possible, standards should be explicit about proficiency levels they must achieve in critical skills — they should include examples from pre-employment tests and interviews used by preferred employers, as well as criteria postsecondary institutions use to assess applicants for admission.

To reflect the "real world," standards must:

- *Be developed by people from all parts of communities.* Scholars, teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and researchers in the disciplines are the experts who can define the subject-based knowledge and skills that help develop the core competencies all students must master. But the standards must be established through a broad-based, inclusive process involving parents; business, civic, and government leaders; and post-secondary educators. Excluding these additional community representatives can result in standards that measure learning for its own sake, rather than ensuring that students are prepared for the requirements of the workplace and society.

- *Apply to 100% of our students, not just the one-quarter who will graduate from college.* Too frequently in the past, standards development has been driven by the needs of the academic community and oriented toward college admission requirements. Employers and postsecondary training institutions also have requirements which must be communicated through standards. Young people must be prepared for further education, including entry into college, and for employment.

- *Link classroom learning and work.* Most school work is divided into classes lasting about 50 minutes and focused on knowledge in a single subject. Most adult work is not. Educators acknowledge that educational practice needs to change and that schools need to help students connect learning across subjects and with the real world. Standards should help advance these goals.

- *Be realistic.* Because of the focus on academic disciplines that drives most standard-setting activities, the nation runs the risk of stacking standards on top of each other and creating a detailed list of objectives and requirements that, realistically, most students will not achieve and most schools cannot deliver. There are not enough hours in a day. Responsible consolidation of the various subject standards is essential.

5. Standards must be voluntary.

Local control of schools is a cherished American tradition. Many fear that national standards threaten local autonomy. That must not be allowed to happen. National standards are not a federal curriculum.

By "national" the Task Force does not mean "federal." National standards in education have nothing to do with uniformity in education and everything to do with understanding that educational results — high school diplomas or Certificates of Initial Mastery — provide a warranty of competence, wherever and however they were earned. The American employment market is national. Young people entering it must know that they have the knowledge and skills needed — a "common currency" — to succeed in the workplace, regardless of where they went to school.

The role for national standards is to do what no single state or community can realistically do:

- tap the expertise of the best minds in the nation to articulate the common core of skills and develop content standards around that core;
- conduct research in other countries on their standards; and
- provide a common benchmark that states and local school boards can use to compare their standards to other states and nations.

The Task Force is convinced that national standards cannot be imposed on local communities. Standards must be developed with sensitivity to local needs and made available for voluntary adoption in keeping with community needs. In brief, national standards in all areas of study have to earn the right to be taken seriously at the state and local level.

6. Standards must be dynamic.

At all costs, those who set national, state, or local standards must avoid the temptation to define standards for all time. The best hope of American education is to create standards that are dynamic and vital — benchmarks that look to the future and are capable of continuous improvement.

In all areas of knowledge, for all students, standards must be open to continual updating against global benchmarks. As the knowledge and skills required for success in life and work climb, curriculum and expectations for students must climb with them. In brief, standards-setting processes should be organized to incorporate critical new knowledge and skills as they emerge, not simply define standards for a curriculum organized around the needs of a rapidly receding economic era.

7. Standards must include criteria against which performance is measured.

Assessment is the heart of the matter. Achieving standards, not setting them, should be the nation's ultimate goal. Every area of study should be assessed against established standards — students must demonstrate competence in core skills and the ability to apply subject knowledge. Assessment results should be able to distinguish between acceptable and outstanding performance.

Assessment can also serve as a tool for continuous improvement of the delivery system and for accountability to the public. Assessment should help teachers gauge student progress and adapt instruction to enable each student to meet the standards. Assessment should permit schools and districts to continuously monitor and improve their performance. It should also provide the foundation for public reports, perhaps in the form of "annual report cards" on school and system performance.

Assessment alone will not ensure achievement of standards. In business, employees and managers are responsible for their own performance. The same must be true in schools. Teachers are responsible for creating challenging learning environments for all students. Students must become the "workers" in their own learning, responsible for their own performance.

Standards, and accountability for reaching them, must encourage the kind of productive work habits and sense of self-responsibility in school that will be required on the job. If young people leave school after twelve years of low expectations, shoddy work, and minimal performance, their future prospects for productive participation in their communities and workplaces are grim.

8. Business leaders must have a seat at the table.

Business leaders are acutely conscious of their responsibility to assist in standards-setting and believe that business involvement is critical at the community, state, and national levels.

Business has much to contribute to the discussion. Business leaders will focus on results and student performance, not the details of curriculum or pedagogy. They will expect substance in K-12 curriculum and insist on standards

oriented toward world-class performance. And they will make sure that standards are developed and discussed in a straightforward way, so that the general public can understand not only the stakes involved, but also the standards themselves and the performance measures.

Above all, business can define what graduates should be expected to know and be able to do. And, business can help schools understand the foundation skills that enable students to be lifelong learners and prepare themselves for success in many jobs, not just their first.

9. **Standards and performance measures must be understood and supported by parents and the general public.**

One conclusion stands out in the history of recent local and state reform efforts: without parental and public support, reform cannot succeed. Education reform driven by high standards will challenge all Americans to confront a paradox in public perceptions — the simultaneous conviction that education nationally is in trouble but "our local schools are fine." Conceivably true in some communities, the two perceptions cannot possibly be valid in all.

Generating public and parental support for higher expectations and standards is critical. Parents must know and understand that these standards are the foundation of their children's life chances. Parents and the public must be committed to ensuring that their schools do whatever it takes to provide all children with the opportunities they need to meet higher expectations.

Getting this message across in a realistic, but non-threatening and supportive, manner must start with crystal-clear statements about what the standards are and what they involve, and give concrete illustrations of what they mean in practice, so that typical citizens can understand and support them. Wherever they occur, jargon, obscurity, and technical clutter must be replaced with straight talk, clarity, and common sense.

The American people are being asked to support a major change in local schools to advance national standards and the National Education Goals. To answer positively, the public must understand where it is being asked to go, why it has to respond, and where it is likely to wind up.

Business Is Prepared to Contribute

Although the agenda that has been outlined is ambitious, responsibility for carrying it out does not fall solely on government, educators, panels, or councils. The business community also has substantial contributions to make to the progress of this effort and is prepared to make them.

The business community is committed to action in several areas to help ensure that public schools, from kindergarten through career, work for all our young people and prepare them for success in life and work.

First, the Task Force will continue to work with small and large firms to define work in terms of job skills required for successful performance in different occupations, in different economic sectors, and at different levels of responsibility. The Task Force will keep educators fully informed of this work.

Building on this activity, the Task Force will communicate to schools how work requirements are continuously changing, and will push for more up-to-date curriculum, instructional techniques, and technologies. The Task Force will also urge colleges and universities to ensure that education professionals know and can teach foundation and workplace skills so that all students achieve the standards.

Also, the Task Force is committed to opening up the world of work to teachers, administrators, parents, and students. To understand the changes sweeping the workplace, nothing is better than a first-hand look. Through internships, tours, workshops, and regular contact with local schools, the Task Force is convinced that teachers and learners will better understand business's demand for higher standards and gain new insights into the link between classroom learning and success on the job.

Finally, the Task Force commits itself to a leadership effort to encourage firms to make hiring and promotion decisions based on standards. The business world must place new priority on what students studied in school, what demands they placed on themselves, and how much they achieved. Business has a major responsibility to communicate its expectations to employees who are parents and taxpayers.

Promises to Keep

A new century brings with it new uncertainties. The American people and their educators face a changing world, but they can face it confidently with new education goals, new schools, and a new commitment to standards that make education work for everyone.

In outlining the ambitious standards agenda contained in this document, the Business Coalition for Education Reform and the Business Task Force on Student Standards do not pretend that it will be achieved easily or quickly. Many challenges lie ahead. Inevitably, obstacles will have to be surmounted and distractions avoided.

But one thing is clear: our society, leaders, and people must take up the agenda and, having taken it up, pursue it to its conclusion. America has many promises to keep. The most important is the one first made on this continent — that all citizens by virtue of their effort, industry, and the dignity of their labor are entitled to reach as far and as high as their aspirations will carry them. The Business Coalition is committed to that American promise and invites all who care about our future to join us in the effort to realize it.

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January, 1995

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NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS

The National Alliance of Business is a business-led, nonprofit organization dedicated to building a competitive American workforce by enhancing the skills and knowledge of workers to meet the needs of business. Today, the key to American business competitiveness lies in a quality workforce — where every citizen is educated and trained to world-class standards, beginning in the classroom and continuing in the workplace. The Alliance works to ensure that business needs drive changes in our nation's education and training agendas, and that businesses have the resources they need to make improvements in their own workforces.

American Business Conference
Black Business Council
Business Higher Education Forum
The Business Roundtable
Committee for Economic Development
The Conference Board
Council on Competitiveness
Chamber of Commerce of The United States
National Alliance of Business
National Association of Manufacturers
National Association of Women Business Owners
U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Twelve national business organizations have joined forces to form the Business Coalition for Education Reform (BCER), a unique collaborative dedicated to strengthening America's schools. By supporting and expanding business involvement in education at the national, state, and local levels, the BCER strives to increase academic achievement for all students. Three key activities are critical to reaching this goal:

- raising academic standards for all students;
- ensuring that standards reflect the academic and workplace skills needed for sustaining a growing economy; and
- helping the public understand the critical need for world-class academic standards and necessary changes needed for schools systems to deliver them.

The BCER is leveraging resources, expertise, and partnerships to help states and communities learn from one another's experiences in advancing education reform. To that end, the BCER has created a network of state and local organizations to facilitate the sharing of resources and to coordinate efforts at the national level between BCER member organizations.

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